



THE BOARD REPORT



2000-01: Issue 5

January 2001

The State Board of Education met on Wednesday, January 3, 2001. Below are highlights of the meeting.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Greater Expectations: Connecticut's Comprehensive Plan for Education 2001-2005

The Board adopted its five-year plan for education, *Greater Expectations: Connecticut's Comprehensive Plan for Education 2001-2005*, as required by state statute. While acknowledging that Connecticut has, in the aggregate, been highly successful in increasing student achievement, the Board adopted as its vision "greater expectations" for the next five years. A significant focal point in the development of the five-year plan was the unacceptable gaps in the achievement, resources and opportunities for students in some schools and districts. Chairman Craig Toensing stated, "Our goal is to ensure that all Connecticut students achieve standards of excellence, no matter what community they reside in or what challenges they face."

The plan contains goals and priorities for the period 2001-05, and addresses goals set forth in Section 10-4p of the General Statutes, in response to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* Supreme Court decision:

- to achieve resource equity and equality of opportunity;
- to increase student achievement;
- to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation;
- to improve effective instruction; and
- to encourage greater parental and community involvement in all public schools of the state.

The Board's strategic priorities for the next five years are as follows:

1. every student will be challenged to reach excellence;
2. there will be a continuous closing of the achievement gap;
3. all schools will offer all students positive, safe learning environments in which everyone behaves responsibly and respectfully toward others;
4. every student and teacher will be technologically literate;

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The Board adopted the report *Enhancing Educational Opportunities and Achievement: First Biennial Report of Progress in Reducing Racial, Ethnic and Economic Isolation, Increasing Resource Equity and Increasing Student Achievement: 1997-98 to 1999-2000*. This report, required by state statute, documents the efforts by Connecticut's 166 school districts to reduce student isolation and improve learning opportunities.

Acknowledging that Connecticut's school districts have taken reasonable steps to address the mandate of the Supreme Court in *Sheff v. O'Neill*, Commissioner Theodore S. Sergi stated, "Much more must be done. The initial small measure of progress should serve to motivate specific legislative changes, additional state funding and the continuing commitment to implement, evaluate and report on, and then further improve, state and local efforts every two years."

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LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

PART III

The Board adopted Part III of its legislative proposals for the Year 2001 Session of the General Assembly. The Board adopted proposals summarized below:

Magnet Schools

- The Commissioner shall not award a magnet school operating grant if more than 75 percent of an interdistrict magnet school's total enrollment is from one school district. Reducing the percentage of students allowed to enroll from any one district from 80 percent to 75 percent will allow more opportunities for students from different districts to participate in the school.
 - Not more than 75 percent of the students in an interdistrict magnet school shall be minority students nor shall more than 75 percent of the students in an interdistrict magnet school be nonminority students. Any school district or regional educational service center that does not meet this requirement shall not receive a magnet school operating grant, except that the Commissioner may waive the requirement for one year, but not for a second consecutive year.
 - All students in the state shall be eligible to attend a state-funded interdistrict magnet school at the shared expense of the state and their town of residence, provided that certain conditions are met (e.g., at any one time the town of residence shall not be required to support the participation of more than 5% of its students in attending magnet schools outside of the town). This proposal will permit students and parents to choose attendance at interdistrict magnet schools, with some limitations, and will require some local support.
 - Notwithstanding the above proposals, all students enrolled in magnet schools in the 2001-02 school year will be allowed to complete the highest grade in the magnet school in which they are enrolled.
- Commissioner may ask surrounding communities to provide extensive long-term projections concerning the availability of spaces in their district to ensure that anticipated demand is met.
- Beginning with the 2001-02 school year, the proportion of nonminority students to the total number of students leaving Hartford, Bridgeport or New Haven to participate in the program shall not be greater than the proportion of non-minority students to the total number of students enrolled in these cities, respectively, and the regional educational service center operating the program shall make program participation decisions to ensure this result.
 - Beginning with the 2003-04 school year, all priority school districts other than Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven may participate in the program, but these districts may only receive students, and such students must bring racial, ethnic and economic diversity to the priority school district and cannot increase the racial, ethnic and economic isolation in the priority school district.
 - Beginning with the 2001-02 school year, school districts surrounding New London and Windham that currently receive students from priority school districts other than Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven under the 2001-02 program, shall be eligible for interdistrict cooperative grants to fund the students participating in the program. Such students shall be entitled to attend school in the receiving district until they graduate from high school.
 - The provision which states that the admission policies for students to participate in the program are to be consistent with Section 10-15c of the Connecticut General Statutes concerning discrimination in public schools should be removed. Because the primary purpose of this program is to reduce isolation, we must be conscious of the racial, ethnic and economic diversity of its participants.

Interdistrict Student Attendance Program

- Beginning in the 2001-02 school year, the statewide interdistrict program will operate in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport, allowing these districts to both send and receive students in the program. This will allow the full student demand for the program to be met. The

CONNECTICUT ADMINISTRATOR TEST

The Board adopted the Connecticut Administrator Test for candidates seeking recommendation for the education administrator endorsement (092). The Board adopted the test to raise the quality of Connecticut school leaders by helping prepare institutions to better align their curriculums with the Connecticut School Leader Standards and by providing a means by which achieving higher standards may be measured.

Beginning September 1, 2001, students seeking certification in this area will be required to pass the CAT prior to being recommended for certification by their preparing institution. The test will be administered three times during the 2001-02 school year, and will cost from \$200 to \$300. Individuals who hold a certificate with a current 092 endorsement will not be required to take the CAT.

The CAT program will be independently administered by the EASTCONN regional educational service center and monitored by the Connecticut State Department of Education. Experienced Connecticut educational administrators and preparation program faculty members who have completed scoring training will score the CAT responses.

Comprehensive Plan *(continued from page 1)*

5. every school and district will have highly competent teachers and administrators with high expectations for students' achievement and for their own teaching and/or leadership;
6. each school district shall provide educational opportunities for its students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds;
7. state resources will be increased, equitably distributed and used efficiently so that all schools will have the capacity to ensure that all students achieve at high levels;
8. services will be expanded to meet the needs of young children;
9. school-family-community-business partnerships will be expanded to meet the needs of at-risk students, prepare students for the world of work, and promote the educational competence of adults; and
10. Connecticut's Regional Vocational-Technical School System will provide students with a rigorous educational program meeting the needs of Connecticut's citizens and employers in the 21st century.

Enhancing Educational Opportunities and Achievement *(continued from page 1)*

In 1999-2000, an estimated 200,000 students and teachers were involved in one or more activities that were initiated in response to the statutory mandate. The Board approved several proposals designed to increase this number, enhancing the integration of suburban communities with Connecticut's central cities. The proposals are as follows:

- ❖ expand and fund the interdistrict cooperative grants program to serve one-half (270,000) of the state's student body and include new statewide program providers;
- ❖ continue the growth of interdistrict magnet schools, particularly in the major cities;
- ❖ meet the full student demand for Open Choice in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport. The expansion of the program should be limited to suburban students going into Connecticut's other cities' schools;
- ❖ recruit, train, hire and retain minority staff members at an accelerated pace;
- ❖ direct new state funds to address urban, poor and minority student achievement gaps;
- ❖ provide additional funds to the regional educational service centers to develop, operate and expand opportunities to reduce student and district isolation within each region of the state;
- ❖ increase state support for the continued improvement of urban school districts and education in general, as indicated in the Board's budget proposal; and
- ❖ engage every professional education organization, including higher education, in the goal of reducing isolation.

The plan cites numerous actions that will be taken to address these priorities as well as recommendations for consideration by local school districts. A copy of the plan will be disseminated to superintendents and the chairperson of each local board of education.

**POSITION STATEMENT
ON THE
EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

In keeping with a five-year review cycle of its position statements, the Board reviewed and made some changes in its Position Statement on the Education of Students with Disabilities. The statement continues to emphasize the need for a unified and coordinated system of services to better serve all students. Minor language changes have been made in the 1996 statement that more strongly emphasize the establishment of a continuum of services for students as well as the need for education to occur in the least restrictive environment. An additional indicator of good practice relating to character education has been added, stressing that schools must promote a positive school climate for all children, including those with disabilities. A copy of the statement is attached to this issue of *The Board Report*.

**POSITION STATEMENT
ON THE
EDUCATION OF STUDENTS ACQUIRING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

The Board reviewed its existing Position Statement on the Education of Students Acquiring English as a Second Language. Minor editorial changes were made. The Board's primary goal for students who are acquiring English as a second language is to acquire a level of English proficiency that will allow full participation in the mainstream academic program. The Board also states the importance of all students attaining writing and speaking competency in at least two languages. A copy of the statement is attached to this issue of *The Board Report*.

Dr. Eddie Davis, Chief of the Bureau of School-Family-Community Partnerships, described the bureau's progress toward promoting, developing and sustaining partnerships for the purpose of increasing student achievement. The Bureau was formed in July 1999 to focus on school improvement efforts, the family as the center of learning, and promoting collaboration between the school, the family and the community to improve every child's health and academic well-being.

Initiatives in place that support this goal include the statewide family literacy initiative, school-family partnerships, school and community partnerships, and programs to ensure safe and healthy schools. Dr. Davis documented the bureau's success in working with schools, families and community agencies by giving a case study of one mother's effort to care for her children, ensure that they receive health and education services, and acquire job skills that will enable her to be self-sufficient.

Dr. Davis pointed out the need to coordinate services between state agencies and service providers (e.g., family resource centers; child-care providers, school-based health clinics; Departments of Education, Public Health, and Social Services). He added that the school building is a natural setting in which to enhance and coordinate services provided to families, and noted the importance of principals and teachers welcoming family members and community members into the school community. For further information on services provided by this Bureau, please call Dr. Eddie Davis, 860-566-5898.

GIFT FROM AETNA FOR TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

Aetna, Inc. donated \$13,347 in support of the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Program. These funds will be used to sponsor the annual awards ceremony at the Bushnell Theatre and cover expenses of the Connecticut Teacher of the Year for travel and other costs incurred in the performance of his or her duties.

APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL APPROVAL

The Board appointed Robert E. Kozaczka to the Advisory Council for School Approval for the period January 2001 through June 2003. The Council reviews and recommends all procedures, evaluation instruments, materials and criteria related to the state approval process in collaboration with the State Department of Education. It recommends to the State Board approval of schools seeking state approval and reviews applications of accrediting agencies for recognition by the State Board of Education.

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM (RVTSS) MATTERS

The Board adopted a **Five-Year Rolling Capital Equipment and Capital Improvement Plan** for the RVTSS, for submission to the General Assembly.

It also approved the **1998-99 and 1999-2000 Biennial Summary Report**, as required by Section 10-95k of the General Statutes. The report contains data on applicants to the RVTSS, enrollment, graduate follow-up and fiscal data. The Central Office and school directors use this data in assessing progress toward reaching goals and in planning for future improvements. This report, too, will be submitted to the General Assembly.

Trade Reauthorizations: The following trades were reauthorized for the period January 2001 through January 2006:

Dental Assistant
Engine Repair-Diesel
Graphic Communications
Masonry
Practical Nurse Education

Two trades were not recommended for reauthorization: Avionics, and Painting and Decorating. These have been discontinued, and staff members and students have been absorbed into other programs. State law requires that the State Board of Education evaluate existing VTSS technical trade programs in accordance with a five-year review cycle.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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❖ To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Public Information, 860-566-1304.	<i>Theodore S. Sergi, Secretary</i> <i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i>

The Board Report is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the format and content of **The Board Report**. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us

The next meeting of the State Board of Education is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2001. The meeting will be held in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut, at 9:30 a.m. Visitors are advised to call the Office of Board Matters to confirm the meeting date and time.

Best wishes for a very Happy New Year.

